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# Tunisian Incident

Mike Mansfield 1903-2001

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FOR RELEASE

Statement of Senator Mike Mansfield (D., Montana)

THU FEB 13 1959

The bombing attack on the Tunisian village of Sakiet-Sidi-Youssef was shocking. It was wholly unworthy of the great traditions of France. I cannot believe that this was an act of the French people, a people whose sense of humanity and decency is as high as that of any other people in the world. I cannot believe that it was a responsible act of the present French Republic. For all its difficulties, French officials in Paris cannot have lost their awareness of right and wrong. They cannot have so forgotten their righteous wrath at the reprisals taken against France during World War II as now to sanction the same methods against others.

This attack on the helpless in a Tunisian village was not an act of France and the French people. It was an act of madness perpetrated by a handful of irresponsible men who have splattered the very flag they purport to represent, the very uniform they wear.

No matter what is done now, it will not restore the innocent dead in Tunisia. To be sure, we can and should deplore the incident. To be sure, this country can and should express deep regrets, the more so since some of the planes that carried out the attack were of American manufacture.

Even more, however, we can act. We can adjust our policies in a manner which will help to move the situation in North Africa from the brink of chaos to a position of peace. The question now is to find a means out of the impasse in which this grave incident has placed France and Tunisia, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the whole western world in its

relations with Arab peoples, especially with those of North Africa who are closest to the West in outlook.

The key to the difficulty and the basic cause of the present incident is Algeria. Recent statements put out by the Algerian National Liberation Front show a growing hostility to the United States. The Front now demands that our bases be reassessed, in other words, be removed from North Africa. This means, of course, the bases in Libya and Morocco. If this demand were to be fulfilled, it would mean that NATO would be in grave danger of encirclement; it would mean that Cairo would become the dominant Arab base in North Africa; and it would mean that the way for further intensive Soviet penetration would be paved.

We cannot in these circumstances divorce ourselves from what is going on in North Africa. So long as the dispute in that region involved only France and the Algerian nationalists, that may have been possible. It is no longer possible. The bombing incident in Tunisia has turned the dispute into a situation with worldwide implications, with implications, as indicated above, that involve us and our policies in many ways.

The United States, it seems to me, must align its policies on North Africa not with those who have committed this act in Tunisia, but with the finest sentiments of the French people and those of free people throughout the world. In the immediate incident, this means that <sup>if the matter is referred to the United Nations, and</sup> once the facts are established:



(1) This country should support in the United Nations and by diplomacy the claims of the innocent against those who bombed, for damages to property and persons as a result of the raid on Saïket-Sidi-Youssef as well as other appropriate restitution;

(2) This country should support the establishment of United Nations emergency patrols along both the Tunisian-Algerian and the Moroccan-Algerian border, the same types of patrols that have functioned so effectively on the Israeli-Egyptian frontier.

These are, at best, suggestions designed to prevent a further deterioration in the situation in North Africa. The need is deeper. The need still is for peace in Algeria, a peace that satisfies the decent people of that region and of France even if it does not please those who rain death with the terrorist grenade or the bombing plane. Such a settlement ~~must~~<sup>could</sup> be based on acceptance of the principle that all who live permanently in Algeria have equal rights and equal obligations. At this late date, it may well be that it will take more than the French and the Algerians to work out that kind of solution in Algeria. It may well take the good offices of those who, disinterested in the immediate situation, desire the friendship of both and whose friendship is sought by both.



(Last paragraph)

If this can be done, I express the hope that the Franco-Tunisian affair and the question of Algeria can be settled outside the United Nations by the interested parties themselves. If this hope can become a fact, it will be in the best interests of those immediately concerned, as well as the best interests of those at a distance who are concerned. Time is of the essence.